



Some Brief

REMARKS
ON THE
LETTERS
OF THE
GENEVA and OXFORD
UNIVERSITIES.
Lately publish'd.

He that determines a Matter before he has heard both Sides, is an unjust Judge; tho' he should happen to pass a right Sentence. Seneca.

THE Beginning of this Century has had it's Lustre eclips'd by some unhappy Circumstances: And while the Rest of Europe is miserably Harrafs'd with Bloody Wars; our own Country has had too frequent Occasions to lament the Loss of many brave Lives. Yet we are not without some chearful Pre-sages of better Times; since the Two British Nations, by the Prudent Counsels of our Excellent QUEEN, are become One: A Union that all good Men heartily applaud, and which gives 'em the agreeable Prospect of happy Days thro' all Britain.

Besides this Peace at Home, we have another equally surprizing, That between the Universities of GENEVA and OXFORD; who had been a long time disunited more by the Distance of their Minds and Sentiments, than by the Remoteness of their Situation. Nor has OXFORD been sparing in her Surmizes and Acculations of that other University, but was us'd to Persecute Her with very keen Reflections. Now under the Influence of some kinder Planet, their ancient Feuds are allay'd, and by a wonderful Change of Things; the Lake Lemane and the River Jura have amicably mix'd.

(2)
Id these *Two Mothers* have
shook hands to confirm the Alliance
between them. The Bookeller has
very fitly drawn *Fame* with Two
Trumpets proclaiming this Wonder;
that the remotest Part of the *Europe-
an* World might resound with the
News of this strange Union, which
merits the Applause of *Britains* and
Foreigners too.

Yet 'tis admir'd by such as read
these Instruments of their Alliance,
that whilst the Style of *GENEVA* is
all soft and without Reflection; the
Gentlemen of *OXFORD*, instead of
imitating so good a Pattern, write
with the utmost Keeness and Severity,
wounding their innocent Country-
men, and branding them with the in-
famous Character of *IMPUDENCE*,
REBELLION and *VILLANOUS*
CRIMES.

Tandem animis caelestibus Ira? And
can such Fury dwell in heavenly Minds?
Strange! That the soft Muses, which
always us'd to breath a generous
Sweetness into their Admirers, should
now inspire them with such a Fierce-
ness of Temper: One would rather
think the *OXFORD* Gentlemen, who
profess a Veneration for Antiqui-
ty, were unwilling to recede from a
Custom of the Ancients, to ratifie their
Leagues with a Victim slain: And
therefore resolv'd at the concluding
of *Theirs*, to make a Sacrifice of
their Dissenting Brethren's Reputa-
tion, which was reckon'd equivalent to
a Bloody One.

But we'll pass these heavy Charges
of the *OXONIANs* for the present,
till we have modestly and fairly Scan-
ned a few Passages in the *GENEVA*
Letter.

And First, The *Presbyterian* and o-
ther *Dissenting Ministers* are much
pleas'd to find no Significations of Dis-
pleasure towards them, but Marks of
Gentleness and Moderation every

where. There is not the least Word to
insinuate a Charge of *Schism* against
their *English Brethren* throughout their
Letter. We hope they'll continue fix'd
and unalterable in this Christian Tem-
per, which is no more than becomes
them towards Brethren of the same
Faith and Discipline with themselves.
All the Dissenters of this Island give
their most hearty Thanks to the Church
of *GENEVA*, not only for the many
good Offices it has formerly done the
Reformed World, but for this fresh
Evidence of its Friendly Inclination:
And will be ready to make Returns
as they have Opportunity.

Every good Man will justly commend
the eminent Piety and Moderation
those Gentlemen breath out in these
noble Words, *We account* (say they)
Faith in Jesus Christ, Love to God and our
*Neighbour, a Worship free from all Su-
perstition and Idolatry, which are sufficient*
*to Salvation, very consistent with a Dis-
ference in Ceremonials.* Would to God,
the same Sentiments were deeply root-
ed in the Minds of all that bear the
Reformed Name. This alone would
be a sufficient Antidote to expel the
distemper'd Heats and Rancour, which
miserably inflame the Minds of many:
Nor would People then so rashly and
unjustly damn one another, for the
Sake of differing Modes and Ceremo-
nies. 'Tis for want of this wholesom
Remedy, that the Face of the Reformed
Church at this Day, is so like what *Hi-
lary* the Bishop lamented of old. *While*
(says he) *we are throwing out Anathe-
ma's against one another, hardly any one*
remains a Christian. I dare be bold to
say, That all the Dissenting Ministers
in *England*, will very willingly sub-
scribe this Judgment of the Gentlemen
of *GENEVA*: They cannot but ap-
prove it, if they understand their own
Principles. Nor have they any Thing
more at Heart, than that they and
their Flocks should act according to
this

this blessed Rule. And therefore there is no Reason to suspect they should desert their Reverend Brethren of GENEVA in this sacred Race.

However, we hope they will not take it ill, that we make some free and Brotherly Remarks on a few Passages in their Letter. They seem to hint at the English Presbyterians and other Dissenters when they say, *That some withdrawing from the Discipline and Liturgy of the Church of England, pretend to the Countenance of their Name: Which they would hardly have ventur'd to affirm, if they had not given too much Credit to the false Informations of others.* If they mean as the Oxonians in their Answer understand them, that the Dissenting Brethren withdraw from the Liturgy and Episcopal Discipline upon the meer Authority of GENEVA; They protest before all the World, that they are greatly injur'd by such a Thought. For tho' they have a high Respect for the Church of GENEVA as the Metropolis of a purer Reformation; yet they never so far forgot the Protestant Principle, as to believe that, or any other the most ancient Church, to be the Mother and Mistress of the Rest, from which the Rule of Faith or Discipline is to be deriv'd. 'Tis no small Satisfaction indeed, to find that Church agreeing with them in the Equality of Ministers, and the Apostolical Simplicity of Divine Worship. But yet they conclude the Pillars of the Presbyterian Discipline rest on a much firmer Foundation; the Divine Oracles of the Gospel, and the Practice of those Churches, which keep closest to the Apostolical Institution.

As to that Part of their Letter, where they say, *That their Rites* (which Word must be suppos'd to include their whole Discipline) *are such as their Civil Government, and the Exigency of Things requir'd:* This the Dissenters cannot read without great

Concern. 'Tis a most dangerous Brand, that this would fix upon the Reformation, and what all the Hierarchy will eagerly catch at. For what can be said worse of any Christian Church, than that its *Worship and Sacred Rites* are destitute of any Divine Authority, and squar'd by meer humane Policy? How ill does it become those that ought to be most zealously concern'd for the glorious Reformation of GENEVA, to paint it out in such odious Colours, and cast so great a Blemish on those excellent Servants of God Calvin and Viret, as if they had been acted by meer Carnal Policy, when they were engag'd in this most divine and blessed Work? Their shining Piety, and the Integrity of their Manners satisfy us of the Contrary: Besides the unexceptionable Testimony of the Reverend Beza in Calvin's Life, who tells us, *That when he return'd to Geneva, he was not so intent upon any Thing, as to have those Laws of Church-Government establish'd with the Consent of the Senate, that to most agreeable to the Word of God, which neither Ministers nor People should be at Liberty to depart from afterwards.* And the same authentick Historian, speaking a little before of the Laws for appointing Presbyters, and fixing the Whole of their Discipline, expressly tells us, *That Calvin drew 'em up agreeable to the Word of God.*

If we consult Calvin himself, in an Answer to a certain Curate (which we have among his Epistles) he has these Words, *'Tis plain that in re-forming our Church we had* Calv. E. p. 242. Ed. Amst.
Regard meerly to the Word of God; which is the only Rule by which it was modell'd or can lawfully be maintain'd. Many Passages to this Purpose are up and down in the Writings of Calvin and Beza, which (without Offence) we presume to say, should have restrain'd the Gentlemen

from making so mean
about their famous Re-
formation.

They readily own'd by the Dissenting Brethren, that there was an Inter-
course by Letters between *Calvin* and *Beza*, and some eminent *English* Pre-
lates: And they highly honour 'em
for their pious Zeal and Freedom in
admonishing some of those Prelates
of their Duty; which yet was so un-
acceptable to many of the Episcopal
Party, that for that Reason these Re-
verend Men have been unworthily
traduc'd as *impertinent Busie-bodies* and
confident Censurers of others. But 'tis
a great Grief to the true Lovers of
their Country, that thro' the Preju-
dices of many (to say no worse) their
truly Christian Advices were not al-
low'd to take Effect. If they had
been regarded as they ought by such
as then sat at Helm, our Churches by
the Help of God had escaped many a
Storm.

The Gentlemen of *GENEVA* can-
not be Ignorant, what the excellent
Bishop of *Sarum*, Doctor *Burnet*, has
written some Time since in his
Travels; whence it will appear, that
some Prelates of the Church in Queen
Elizabeth's Reign, labour'd seriously,
tho' to no Purpose, to make farther
Advances in the *English* Reformation,
and to remove Matters of Offence.

Those Gentlemen surely will not be
offended that these Things are men-
tioned, when they relate to the Sup-
port of their own Cause, which they
seem to defend with too much Indif-
ference, but certainly it would be-
come them to maintain more Strenu-
ously.

The same Candour we may justly
claim from the Gentlemen of *OX-
FORD*, while in Answer to their heavy
Charges, we endeavour our own De-
fence with Decency and Moderation.

'Tis strange, that these learned

Men should found a severe Accusa-
on of their Country-men, and fix up-
on them the Guilt of the most noto-
rious Crimes, upon the bare Autho-
rity of *Calvin*, as if they would sink and
ruin them with the Weight of his
Name, which heretofore was of little
Consideration with themselves. A
very pleasant Farce indeed! to see
John Calvin, the Ring-leader of the
GENEVA Discipline, brought upon
the Stage, leading up an *High-Church*
Jig. But this Mask which is put
upon him with so ill a Grace, may
easily be taken off by a full Recital of
his own Words, which are but im-
perfectly Quoted in the *OXFORD* Let-
ter. If (says he) *the Papists will shew*
us such a Hierarchy, in which
Bishops preside, yet so as not
to refuse Subjection to Christ,
but still to respect and depend
on him as the only Head: In
which they maintain Brotherly Affection,
so as to be united by no other Bond but
that of the Truth as it is in Jesus: Then
indeed I'll own, if any such there be, they
deserve the severest Anathema, who will
not pay the highest Reverence and Obedi-
ence to it.

Calv.
Tractat.
p. 60. Ed.
Amst.

From which Words of *Calvin*, rack
them how you please, you cannot ex-
tort an Approbation of the *English*
Hierarchy. No one that is at all
conversant in his Writings, will ever
imagine it was his Design to declare
for that exorbitant Power of Bishops,
which obtains in the *Church of Eng-*
land. This is what he opposes to
his utmost, where he professedly
treats of the *Episcopal Office*, parti-
cularly in the 4th Book of his *In-*
stitutions, Chap. 3. And (to wave
the other Expressions) we may easily
understand from that Place, what he
means here by their *Subjection to*
Christ; namely, their embracing that
Church-Discipline which the Apostles
instituted by the Command of Christ:

ac-

according to which, Bishops and Presbyters are reckon'd of the same Order, though the former may be allowed a greater Eminency as Presidents and Moderators of the Presbyteries.

The *Dissenting* Ministers have hitherto believed that this was Calvin's Opinion: And doubt not but those of *GENEVA*, who have subscrib'd the 30th * *Article of the Gallican Confession*, will herein readily agree with them: And consequently that they think their *Dissenting* Brethren here out of the Reach of Calvin's *Anathema*.

The Gentlemen of *OXFORD* can have little Reason to charge all that separate from the Church of England with the Guilt of *Schism*, if they will stand to Calvin's Judgment in this Controversie, as they press Others with his Authority. For in that Book of the *Necessity of reforming the Church* (where the *Oxonians* found the *Anathema* they discharge at the *Dissenters*.) He has these memorable Words. *Then shall we be one Body and one Spirit, — if we adhere to one God, as knit together by the Bond of Faith.* And a little after he adds, *'Tis therefore very certain, that we then maintain Church-Unity, when agreeing in Purity of Doctrine* (without any more) *we grow up into one Christ.* Ibid. Page 59.

If these Assertions are consonant to Scripture and sound Reason, what Pretence have they to repeat again their old Cant of *Schism*, and how can they think to fright us with that silly

Bug-bear? The *Dissenting* are perfectly unconcern'd at the Calumnies of this Nature imput'd against them; as long as they are well assur'd they have Nothing among them in the least repugnant to the Holy Scriptures, or even to the Doctrinal Articles of the Church of England.

I have neither Leisure nor Inclination to give a full Account of the Separation here, in which so many ingenious Pens have been too long engag'd: Nor is this a Place to detect all the gross Mistakes of a late Writer, Dr. *Nichols*, who has done his utmost to give Foreigners an ill Opinion of the *Dissenters*. Both of these are like (if God please) to be perform'd in due Time by a proper Hand. And therefore all that the *Dissenting* Brethren desire of Foreign Protestants is, That they will have the Candour not to condemn them unheard, remembering that Oracle which is the Language of Reason it self, *If 'tis enough to be accus'd, who can be innocent!* But before we dismiss this Charge of *Schism*, I would annex the memorable Judgment of the famous *Hales* of *Eaton*, who was a bright Ornament both of the Church of England, and the University of Oxford. When (says he) either false or uncertain Conclusions are obtruded for Truth; and Acts either unlawful or ministring just Scruples are requir'd of us to be perform'd: In these Cases Consent were Conspiracy, and open Contestation is not Faction or Schism, but due Christian Animosity.

Let

* The Words of that Article are these. — *Credimus omnes veros Pastores, ubicunque locorum collocati fuerint, eadem & æquali inter se Potestate esse præditos, sub uno illo Capite, summoque & solo Universali Episcopo Jesu Christo.* (i.e.) *We believe all true Pastors, wherever they are fix'd, have the same and equal Power one with another, under that one Head, the chief and only Universal Bishop, Jesus Christ.*

Now consider another bloody Argument against us for *Rebellion*. For of that Notorious Crime the Gentlemen of *OXFORD* have with as little Reason impeach'd their Countrymen, who with the greatest Regard and Fidelity pay Obedience to their Rulers. 'Tis strange these famous Interpreters of Languages and Laws should blunder about the Sense of *Perduellio*. For in the Judgment of those Authors who have treated of this Argument, it signifies the same as *Lesa Majestas*, Treason against the Prince; against which the Laws of all Nations denounce the severest Punishments. But how I beseech you are the *Dissenting Brethren Traitors to their Prince*; Their Professions of Loyalty and unfeign'd Congratulations Her SACRED MAJESTY has more than once declar'd acceptable to Her. Their Fidelity to the Government is so well known both to *Her Majesty*, and *Her High-Court of Parliament*, That they have thought fit to declare the Law which secures their Peace and Priviledges (however envied by many) Sacred and Inviolable. And since our Rulers have thought a Form of Church-Government different from *Episcopacy* worthy of their Protection, 'tis plain they have no Jealousie that it carries in it *Rebellion* or any other Notorious Villany. Therefore 'tis to be hop'd our *Foreign Brethren* will not fall upon us with any severer Censure, whatever Sollicitations may be used for that Purpose, as long as we have the common Bond of one Faith.

I congratulate those of *GENEVA* on the surprizing Affection the *University of OXFORD* expresses for them. But he must have an uncommon Penetration, that can unriddle those certain Words of a Sense very different among Englishmen and Foreign-

ers, which had given *Umbrage* to (those People, it seems, of a duller Capacity) the Gentlemen of *GENEVA*. The *OXONIANS* acknowledge indeed certain Expressions might drop from some of their Body, which seem'd to bear hard upon *OXFORD*: But then they say they had no Design to fix a Mark of Disgrace either on their Republick, their Church or their University. A very unaccountable Interpretation, one would think! and that looks like trifling with them. For what Grammar or Rhetorick in the World has ever taught Men to wrest at this rate Words of the most plain and agreed Signification to quite another Sense? *Cato's Age* certainly is return'd upon us, who complain'd of old, that the Romans had lost the right Names of Things. When for Instance, the *Oxford Poet* had expressly call'd *GENEVA* *foeda*, foul or filthy; though the Rules of Rhetorick might admit some others that resembled those of *GENEVA* to be glanc'd at in this Sarcasm, yet either that Republick or Church itself must necessarily share at least in the Infamy. Otherwise we must make a new Grammar. Yet they are to be commended for some Remains of Modesty still appearing. One may say here as the Comic Poet, *Erubuit, Salva res est*. Since they blush, they have some Grace left.

Let's now proceed to remark the wonderful deal of Charity which the *University of OXFORD* professes for the Reformed Churches. Which really is done so sparingly, that She rather seems to wheedle them with the Colour of it. For these are the Words of the *OXFORD Letter*. 'Tis very disagreeable to our Charity, with too rigid a Censure, to damn those Protestant Churches as altogether destitute of lawful Pastors or of Sacraments rightly

administered, which forc'd by the inevitable Law of Necessity, have departed with Reluctancy from the Primitive Form of Episcopal Government. And is this all their Charity for the Reformed Churches, that they have thought fit to express in such Swelling Words! I would fain see their clear Proof that the Church of *Hesse*, and Others that had Protestant Princes at the Time of the Reformation, were forc'd by the inevitable Law of Necessity to depart from the Form of Episcopal Government? How does it appear that the Church of *GENEVA* it self, which the *OXONIANS* now so mightily caresse, did with Reluctancy cast off the *Hierarchy*? One can hardly believe the Authors of this Epistle themselves are really of that Opinion, when the Words of *Beza* before-cited are so well known, which testify, That the Laws for the Church-Government of *GENEVA* were established with the Consent of the Senate, and to be sure not against the Mind of the Church. Does not this of their Consent plainly intimate, that the Work was begun and brought to Perfection out of Choice? The Consequence seems to be this, The Charity of the Gentlemen of *OXFORD* for the Reformed Churches is very narrow and strait-lac'd, and the Church of *GENEVA* it self owes them no great Thanks.

But yet it must be own'd, their Language is a little softer than what has been usual heretofore with those of the *Hierarchy*. We have a notable Specimen of that, from a zealous Defender of Episcopacy Dr. *Scrivener*, in his *Invective against the English Schismatics*, Printed An. 1672. which the Episcopal Party then generally applauded. I declare freely, (says he) that the whole Fabrick of the Church of Geneva is not so much the Effect of human

Prudence as Impudence, and the Spirit of God never could be the Author of it. For they have rejected the Word of the Lord, and there is no Wisdom in them; Jer. 8. 9. For what must we think of such a Church as is destitute of a true Ministry, or of such Pastors as are establish'd without any lawful Authority? Good Man! He might very safely venture to speak plain; for he had nothing to fear from his own Party, nor does it appear that he ever receiv'd the least Reprimand from his Superiours. While these Gentlemen chuse to speak more cautiously, and seem to acknowledge the Church of *GENEVA* to have lawful Pastors, I doubt whether they will please all their own Clergy. If we may give Credit to Reports, this Profession of their Charity gave great Distast to several Sons of their own University.

This is not a Place to enter into Debates about the antient Form of Church-Government: Nor is there any Necessity for it, as long as the famous *Blondel's Apology for Jerom's Opinion* is in the Hands of the Learned. But when the Gentlemen of *OXFORD* pretend to Prophecy, that the Protestant Interest would gain more Ground, if the Form of the *Hierarchy* werereceiv'd in all Churches; I cannot easily be of their Opinion: because 'tis well known the Churches which embraced the *Presbyterian Discipline*, have oppos'd *Popery* with as great Success as the Church of *England*; who boasts, That she alone of all the Reformed Churches is bless'd with the Apostolical Government.

Yet after all, I would not have any Thing in these Remarks, interpreted as if the Dissenting Ministers would rob the Church of *England* of the Reputation she deserves. They readily own that she has true Pastors

...at a Distance
...Congregations,
...as if they were
...But we look
...as debarr'd by
...God or Man, from hold-
...and *stated Com-*
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...sities shall be extinguish'd, all Bigot-
...try banish'd the Minds of Christians,
...all the reformed Churches shine with
...primitive Holiness; and our native
...Country abound with every Blessing,
...under the long and happy Govern-
...ment of *ANNE* the best of Queens.
AMEN.

F I N I S.



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